STEP FIVE: MONITORING AND GUIDING STUDENT PROGRESS & PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

The final step in providing effective educational services for ESL students is actually a series of steps for monitoring and guiding student progress:

- I. Ongoing monitoring of development of language and content skills/knowledge as the student progresses through the individualized program of instruction (Assessments of student work are used to determine appropriate instructional approaches, adaptations, materials and coursework).
- II. Determining when the student has acquired the academic language proficiency necessary to be placed full-time at the appropriate grade level in the regular instructional program without ESL services (exit criteria);
- III. Post-service monitoring to ensure successful transition into the regular instructional program;
- IV. Periodic program evaluation to ensure that language and academic support services for ESL students are effective.

The procedures, strategies, and criteria that the district will use to implement monitoring activities should be explained in the Assessment Plan. See Appendix G, p. 106, outline for developing an assessment plan.

This chapter of the handbook briefly describes the four components of the monitoring process and suggests procedures, strategies and criteria to carry them out. Each district determines the details of criteria, tests, strategies and procedures that it will use in the process.

I. MONITORING OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE & ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of monitoring the ESL student's English language and academic development is:

- to assess the student's ongoing progress and achievement in English as a Second Language and content areas in order to plan and modify instruction accordingly;
- to periodically reclassify the student's ESL proficiency level (reclassification);
- to promote the student to different instructional levels within the ESL program on the basis of growth in English language skills (reassignment)

Formal monitoring procedures should be developed to evaluate the progress of ESL students while in the alternative language program.

It is recommended that the ESL teacher(s) and relevant content teachers meet formally at least quarterly to review the language and content development of their mutual students and discuss cases of reclassification of language proficiency and ESL instructional emphasis. A meeting should be held at the end of the school year to discuss progress and recommendations for placement in the next school year.

The ESL teacher closely monitors the student's *development of social communicative language* and academic language proficiency during the school year. Strategies for ongoing assessment of language skills are recommended below. In addition to informal assessments and traditional evaluations of students, many districts administer an ESL proficiency test and/or a curriculum-referenced ESL test, once or twice a year, for the purposes of reclassification of students' language proficiency and determining instructional levels.

The student's ESL and content teachers should collaborate on approaches for monitoring the student's development of *academic language proficiency and content skills and knowledge*. At the elementary level, this means collaboration between the ESL teacher and the classroom teacher. In the middle and high schools, the ESL teacher will need to work with relevant content area teachers to evaluate academic progress. Informal approaches for assessing academic achievement are also discussed below.

All results of formal and informal assessments should be recorded in the student's file or portfolio. The results are shared with the parents of the students at periodic meetings and at an end of the school year meeting, where the ESL Coordination Team discusses the student's placement for the upcoming year.

B. Strategies/Tests

The goal of monitoring progress is to keep track of the students' growth in language and content area skills/knowledge and to guide instruction. Instructional staff need to know whether students are acquiring the academic language proficiency that enables them to listen and comprehend class discussion, complete reading and writing assignments in content areas, etc. It is important that the main focus of monitoring be on progress in acquiring language and academic skills required to meet grade-level content and process expectations.

The LCAP recommends using a combination of ongoing informal assessment approaches and periodic formal tests so that there are multiple criteria for assessing the language and content growth of the student. These assessments must be sensitive to language and cultural backgrounds of the students. For organizational purposes, information from selected performance-based tasks, appropriate tests and student work samples can be combined in individual student portfolios.

1. Informal Assessment

Increasingly, informal assessment strategies are being used to monitor both language and academic development of students at the elementary and secondary levels. These strategies are also being adapted for use in assessing the language and academic development of ESL students. There are many different techniques, both unstructured and structured, to conduct informal assessment.

Informal assessment for monitoring development of *language skills* includes both performance assessment procedures and portfolio assessment. These are defined by Valdez Pierce and O'Malley in *Performance and Portfolio Assessment for Language Minority Students* (1992) as follows:

Performance-based assessments for language-A performance-based assessment is:

"an exercise in which a student demonstrates specific skills and competencies in relation to a continuum of agreed upon standards of proficiency or excellence" and "reflects student performance on instructional tasks and relies on professional rater judgement in its design and interpretation."

Performance-based assessments can be used to assess development of English oral language, reading, and/or writing skills. Methods for implementing performance-based assessment include observations by the ESL teacher or classroom teacher and/or self-assessment by the student. Usually, rating scales, rubrics, matrices or checklists based on performance outcomes and criteria, ideally for a specified level of the ESL curriculum, are used to assess this development in a consistent manner.

Portfolio assessments for language-Portfolio assessment is: "the use of records of a student's work over time and in a variety of modes to show the depth, breadth, and development of the student's abilities; the purposeful and systematic collection of student work that reflects accomplishment relative to specific instructional goals or objectives; can be used as an approach for combining the information from both alternative [informal] and standardized [formal] assessments; and has as key elements student reflection and self-monitoring".

Informal assessment approaches can also be used by language and content teachers to assess whether students are acquiring the *academic language skills and comprehension of subject matter required to do grade-level work.*²⁰

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²⁰ The Center for Applied Linguistics is currently being funded through the National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning to conduct important research designed to ultimately assist schools in assessing academic language of language minority students.

One of the major problems in assessment of ESL students has been that most formal tests, i.e., language tests and academic achievement tests, are inadequate (Short, 1993). In the article "Assessing Integrated Language and Content Instruction", author Deborah Short states.

"Students and teachers realize that most assessment instruments actually test both content concepts and language ability, particularly reading comprehension and writing. Because language and content are intricately intertwined, it is difficult to isolate one feature from the other in the assessment process. Thus, teachers may not be sure whether a student is simply unable to demonstrate knowledge because of a language barrier or whether, indeed the student does not know the content material being assessed. Yet a distinction needs to be drawn, especially if a student is not succeeding in a course."

Though she acknowledges that many schools will continue to use formal standardized tests to compare students on national norms, Short emphasizes that these are "no longer satisfactory as the sole measures of student achievement." In her article she presents a framework or "assessment matrix" designed to help teachers decide which areas of language and content to assess: problem solving, content area and communication skills, concept comprehension, language use, attitudes and individual and group behaviors. She briefly explains informal methods and demonstrates how they can be used to evaluate specific areas. Informal methods described include: skill and concept checklists; reading/writing inventories; anecdotal records and teacher observations; student self-evaluations; performance-based tasks and manipulatives; written essays, reports and projects; oral reports and presentations; interviews.

Short's concluding paragraph presents the best argument for using informal assessment.

"After all, at the heart of instruction is the desire to help our language minority students learn, and at the heart of assessment is the need to determine whether our students have learned. We must assist them in that process by trying new alternatives that are not so language bound, time restrictive, or autonomous. Further, we must advocate assessment practices that mirror instructional practices. Let us focus on our students' strengths and give them opportunities to demonstrate ability, skill, and knowledge through the medium that suits them best, whether oral or written or even, in the case of beginner students, pictorial. Let us familiarize them in advance with the assessment measures and give them adequate time to complete the tasks. Let us help them take some responsibility for their own evaluation, especially through tools such as student checklists, reports, and portfolios. Let us become alternative assessment advocates for our language minority students."

For further information on the purpose, types, design, administration, and scoring of informal assessment approaches to use in monitoring ESL students, see Appendix G, p. 117.

2. Curriculum or criterion-referenced assessments

Another method of assessing English language or academic development is through the administration of a curriculum-referenced or criterion-referenced test (CRT). Some districts choose to use a CRT to assess how well students have mastered specific skills or learning objectives for sequenced ESL proficiency instructional levels. CRTs can also be used to measure progress in other curriculum areas. Usually, such tests are based on the local curriculum developed by teachers in the district.

3. Standardized, norm-referenced assessments

Some districts seek to compare language skills and academic achievement of ESL students to that of a broader segment of the student population, using standardized tests with national norms. There is considerable debate about the use of such tests with both the general student population and also with linguistic and culturally diverse students.

The State of Vermont is moving toward a standards model of assessment which means setting performance criteria and standards for all subject areas. School districts recognize the need to have a balance of assessments, using multiple and authentic methods designed by teachers and based on publicly-defined standards.

Realistically, school districts will continue to use some standardized, norm-referenced tests. The LCAP urges districts to carefully consider whether such tests accurately assess students' academic achievement, i.e., what they have been taught and learned. Standardized norm-referenced or curriculum-referenced tests are sometimes used to measure reading/reading comprehension, math and academic achievement of NELB students who have been enrolled in ESL or mainstream classes. Although formal tests may provide survey information about whether ESL students are acquiring grade-level skills and concepts, they are often less reliable and valid for ESL students due to factors such as linguistic and cultural bias or lack of previous experience with standardized tests.

Districts which opt to include ESL students in district-wide standardized testing should never treat these tests as the *sole* measure of achievement. They might also consider making testing accommodations, since ESL students are confronted with processing both language and content concepts. Allowing students more time to complete test sections, having a bilingual aide explain instructions in the primary/home language, doing practice test sessions to prepare students for standardized test formats, and reviewing tests for bias are some ways to accommodate the needs of ESL students.

4. Vermont Statewide Assessment Program: Portfolios and Uniform Assessment

Vermont's statewide assessment program may provide another source of useful information about ESL students' growth and development in the areas of writing and math problem-solving over time. As part of the movement to make assessment a more accurate reflection of *actual student performance*, Vermont schools are using portfolios at all grade levels to collect "best pieces" of writing and problem-solving in math. All students, with help from teachers, choose their best pieces to include in portfolios. These pieces of daily student work are compared with established standards for good writing and or math skills.

Portfolios of student work serve many purposes, including: helping students to focus on areas that need improvement; guiding teachers in their instruction; providing administrators and school board members with some information about how well students are learning; and providing the state of Vermont with some data for a statewide picture of how well students write and solve math problems.

As part of the Vermont Assessment Program, portfolios of randomly selected students at several grade levels are evaluated by a group of trained teachers to see how well they meet the standards of good writing (5th and 8th grade) and mathematics (4th and 8th grade). In addition to the Portfolio Assessment, the Vermont Assessment Program is supported by the Uniform Assessment given to all Vermont students in grades 4, 5, and 8. The Uniform Assessment requires students to participate in two sessions where they are asked to respond to a writing prompt and solve a number of open-ended math problems.

The Vermont Department of Education has established criteria for *Students To Be Assessed*. These criteria include information on *Students Eligible for Exclusion from the Uniform Assessment.*²¹ According to the Vermont Department of Education, students with limited proficiency in English may be exempted from the Uniform Assessment if they meet the following criteria:

- 1. "The student is: a) a Limited English Proficiency student from a traditionally non-English speaking country; and b) has been enrolled in a school in the United States for less than two years."
- "An exclusion may also be granted to a student who cannot read and comprehend written English. This determination rests with the professional discretion and judgement of local staff based on appropriate language acquisition assessment results."

Participation in *portfolio development*, on the other hand, is for *all students*. Because portfolio activities occur as part of regular classroom instruction, all students are expected to have a portfolio that includes examples of their learning activities.

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²¹For more specifics on portfolio participation, accommodations, exclusion from the Uniform Assessment, and reporting students not tested, school assessment coordinators should contact the Vermont Department of Education Assessment Coordinator, Mary Ann Minardo at (802) 828-3352.

II. DETERMINING WHEN TO EXIT STUDENTS FROM SERVICES

Districts should have exit criteria for determining when students no longer need ESL services. The rationale for exit criteria is:

- to ensure that students meet a high level of English proficiency required for success in academic classes and receive sufficient and appropriate language and academic support services until it is attained;
- to ensure that students are not segregated in a dead end program once they are fluent English proficient.

In the process of monitoring the English language development of students, the ESL teacher(s) will recommend students to be considered for exit from the alternative language program. This would include all students who appear to have developed the academic language skills necessary to participate meaningfully in the regular instructional program.

According to Office for Civil Rights' Policy (September 1991 Policy Update), district procedures for determining when students with limited proficiency in English are no longer in need of special language assistance should be based on *multiple criteria*. At a minimum, the following basic standards for exit criteria must be met:

"Exit criteria must be based on *objective standards*. The district should be able to explain why students meeting these standards will be able to participate in the regular classroom."

"Exit criteria should require that students not be exited from the alternative language program unless they can read, write and comprehend English well-enough to participate meaningfully in the program. Exit criteria that simply test a student's oral language skills are inadequate. (Keyes, 576 F. Supp at 1518, noting importance of testing reading and writing skills as well as oral language skills.)"

"Finally, alternative programs cannot be 'dead end' tracks to segregate national origin minority students."

A. Procedures

Before a student can be exited from a program, the ESL Coordination Team must collect and review all exiting data (formal and informal assessment results, observations, records of academic work). This process requires objective proof of fluent English proficiency and consensus among the ESL teacher, classroom/content teachers, guidance counselor, principal, ESL Coordinator, and parent/guardian(s) that a student is ready to be exited from ESL services.

In most districts, decisions to reclassify students as fluent English proficient and exit them from ESL will be made in the spring of the school year. Only students at the advanced ESL instructional level are be considered for program exit.

The ESL Coordination Team should document all data--informal and formal tests, portfolio data, and teacher observations--supporting the decision to exit a student from ESL services. Reasons for exiting the student from services should be briefly explained.

The team gives the parent/guardian(s) written notification, in the home language if necessary, or verbally notifies them of the exit decision and new instructional placement in an exit meeting. Parents should also be given information about their right to contest the reclassification. The district maintains record of this notification in the student's folder. Relevant instructional personnel receive a report of the student's reclassification, and any pertinent language or learning needs identified through the exit procedures.

ESL students should not be exited from ESL services until there is documented evidence that they are able to perform grade-level work in English. The district should use the same standards or assessment measures that it uses with English-speaking students. If it uses a standardized test to measure students' academic achievement for a comparison on the national level, this should be one of the exit criteria. If other standards or informal assessments are used to measure academic achievement, these may be used as criteria. The guiding principle is that districts maintain the same high expectations of achievement for all students and continue services for as long as needed.

B. Recommended multiple criteria for determining when to fully exit a student from a ESL services²²

The best assurance that students will be exited from ESL services only when they have acquired academic language proficiency is to set sufficiently high standards. Multiple assessments of language and academic development should be given over a period of time and kept in the student's portfolio as documentation.

In general, the ESL Coordination Team should consider students ready for exit only when they demonstrate near-native fluency level or competence on multiple measures of language and academic development. It is up to the school district to establish *specific performance standards and criteria for exiting*. Those involved in developing performance standards and criteria and judging whether ESL students have met them must have a knowledge of the structure and the content of the discipline for a given performance.

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²²These are based on sample exit criteria designed by Robert Parker in "Multiple Criteria for Partial or Full Exit from ESL Services".

A student exiting ESL should meet the following standards of performance:

- **1. Proficiency in Oral Skills**--evidence of ability to comprehend and speak English at the level of peers of the same grade level for both social and academic purposes.
- **2. Proficiency in Reading Skills**--evidence that the student is able to read *in content areas* at the appropriate grade level for academic purposes.
- **3. Proficiency in Writing Skills**--evidence that the student is able to write at the appropriate grade level for academic purposes.
- 4. Evidence of mastery of skill objectives for advanced ESL instructional level
- 5. Documented evidence of successful student performance in content area classes in which the student is already mainstreamed.

6. Other criteria

Possible methods of determining whether students meet multiple criteria for exit from ESL include:

Informal Assessments

- Performance-based assessments of language and content skills using rating scales, rubrics, matrices or checklists--e.g., structured interview, questionnaire, oral presentation, story retelling, writing samples, functional dictation, reading/writing inventories, cloze tests
- Portfolio assessments of student work including: (pieces of work chosen by the student, essays, research papers, journals), creative projects, course-subject quizzes and tests, lab reports, group work, and student self-evaluations of work
- ESL teacher observations based on formal checklist or performance-criteria for fluent English proficiency
- Anecdotal records and criteria-based observations of student progress by teachers in whose classes the student is partially mainstreamed
- Student interviews to assess student knowledge

Formal Assessments

- ♦ Comprehensive ESL proficiency test (listening, speaking, reading and writing skills)
- District developed curriculum-referenced test for evaluating mastery of ESL program objectives correlated to the curriculum, administered by the ESL teacher
- Criterion-referenced or standardized, norm-referenced test(s) of language, reading/reading comprehension, or subject area skills needed at the student's grade level

Additional Methods

- ♦ Review of course work grades
- Student interview to assess readiness for full exit from ESL services
- Parent/guardian observations

C. Resources

For further information on exit criteria, the following resources are recommended:

- Bell, J. (1988). *Entry and Exit Criteria for Title VII Programs.* [Workshop Guide]. Albuquerque, NM: Evaluation Assistance Center-West.
- De George, G.P., (1987/1988). Assessment and Placement of Language Minority Students: Procedures for Mainstreaming. *NCBE Focus Paper #3*. Washington, DC: NCBE.
- Fairfax County Public Schools. (1992). ESL Assessment Guide. Fairfax, VA: Author.
- Miramontes, O. (1988). Reclassification of Limited English Proficient Students: Assessing the Inter-relationship of Selected Variables. *NABE Journal*, 12(3): 219-242.
- Parker, R. (1993). Alternative Assessment. *Designing an Educational Program for Low-Incidence Numbers of Limited English Proficient Students* (pp. 61-97). Providence, RI: New England Multifunctional Resource Center.
- Philadelphia School District. (1987). Handbook for Principals Regarding Students with Limited English Proficiency. Washington, DC: NCBE.

III. POST-SERVICE MONITORING TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION INTO THE REGULAR INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

Office for Civil Right's policy requires that students' performance be monitored after they are exited from an alternative language program. The purpose of post-service monitoring is to ensure that students reclassified as fluent English proficient make a successful transition into the regular instructional program. A successful transition is one in which the student adjusts socially and is able to comprehend instruction, speak, read and write well enough to participate in class, take tests and complete assignments without difficulty. Because the level of linguistic and cognitive difficulty can increase drastically as students move into higher grade levels, it is important to monitor their educational program for three years.

A. Procedures

The district assessment plan should provide written description of responsible monitoring personnel, time intervals and methods for monitoring the performance of students exited from ESL services. The plan specifies a process for re-evaluating the situation, if the student begins to fall behind in the regular instructional program. It also describes various types of support and follow-up service available to students who have difficulty with the transition.

Within two weeks of full exit from ESL services, the ESL Coordination Team will follow-up to see whether the student is adjusting well to the academic situation without language and social support. Close monitoring is especially important during this early stage of transition to make sure the student does not experience frustration and failure due to a premature exit from ESL.

Procedures should provide for three years of periodic monitoring of a student following reclassification to fluent English proficient. A designated member of the ESL Coordination Team, often the ESL teacher, is responsible for contacting the student's content teachers at the end of each quarter. A combination of objective data (grades and academic test scores) and subjective feedback (observations by teacher(s), other relevant school personnel, student, parents/guardian) is important.

The goal of the post-service monitoring is to ascertain whether the student is experiencing success in academic classes. The following questions and criteria will assist in determining whether the student's performance compares favorably with grade-level peers and the instructional placement is successful:

Objective Data--should be maintained long enough to determine whether students are fully participating in all of the school curriculum.

- **1. Academic Information**--What objective evidence is there of successful grade-level performance in academic areas?
- Courses taken
- Grades

- Portfolios, including writing samples, essays, learning logs, journal entries, research papers, creative projects, quizzes and tests.
- **2. Assessment Information**--What assessment data is available comparing the student's achievement with monolingual English peers?
- Tests taken, scores and dates
- ♦ Is the student maintaining appropriate grade-level performance on district measures of achievement (either standardized tests or informal assessments)?

Subjective Feedback

- 1. Observations by teacher(s) in whose class(es) the student is enrolled
- Is the student learning the subject matter expected of students at that school level?
- Is the student well-adjusted socially and culturally?

Equal Access

• Is the student receiving equal access to program options, e.g., college-bound courses, as well as other programs?

Other Criteria

- ♦ Attendance Record?
- ♦ Parent or student observations about the educational program--What is the level of satisfaction?

If students are not succeeding in the regular instructional program, the person conducting post-service monitoring brings it to the attention of the ESL Coordination Team. It is up to the team to revise the student's academic program and arrange for whatever supplemental services are needed.

Of course, students exited from ESL services can experience academic difficulties due to factors other than English language proficiency. It is important to consider the student in context. For example, to adequately identify the source of problems other factors--e.g., equal access, instructional approaches, experiential background, learning style, motivational influences, and cultural differences--should be given serious consideration. If instructional interventions and further investigation rule out these factors as the cause of poor academic performance, a *culturally and linguistically appropriate* evaluation of special needs may be appropriate.

IV. PROGRAM EVALUATION

Districts are responsible for periodically evaluating their program to ensure efficacy of academic and language support services for ESL students. Program design, resources, personnel and practices are all important to evaluate, but the ultimate test of program effectiveness is the success experienced by the students. This success is measured by the degree to which students demonstrate linguistic growth, academic achievement and social integration.

An effective educational program is one in which the students experience success in the total school environment, i.e., the ESL program, broad school curriculum, and social and extracurricular activities. A school staff that is aware of cultural and linguistic diversity, committed to the ideal of equal educational opportunity, and knowledgeable about current instructional practices for ESL students can make a huge difference in the quality of education culturally and linguistically diverse students receive.

When an evaluation shows that students are not experiencing success after a reasonable period of time in a program, Office for Civil Right's policy requires that a district take steps to determine the cause of the program's failure and modify it accordingly.

A. Procedures

The preceding discussion of reassessment focuses primarily on monitoring the progress of *individual* students. The district also needs to have procedures which explain how it will periodically evaluate the *overall effectiveness of its program* (Program Evaluation Plan).

Collection of data on students while they are in language assistance programs and after they exit from services is essential for determining how this population performs academically in comparison to the general school population. This data should be useful in both monitoring of individual students and the overall program effectiveness.

In addition to using data collection, interpretation and reporting as a way to evaluate program effectiveness, the district should have regularly scheduled evaluations to assess the quality of the program. The evaluation would look at how well the district is meeting stated goals and objectives and the quality of resources, personnel and practices implemented.

The actual implementation of overall evaluation of the district's program will depend on the size of the district's population and the type of program. Although all districts are required to evaluate the effectiveness of their services, obviously the evaluation done in a district with only a few students will not be as formal or in-depth as for a district with a larger number of ESL students.

In districts with larger numbers of ESL students, quarterly or biannual meetings between the district ESL coordinator, ESL teacher(s), relevant principals and interested ESL Coordination Team members are recommended. The purpose of such meetings would be to discuss the progress of ESL students in the district, the implementation of program services and any needs and concerns identified.

Appendix I RESOURCES FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

- Several resources are available which should help districts in evaluating the level of coordination and implementation of appropriate educational and ESL programs. These are:
- Friedlander, M. (1991). The Newcomer Program: Helping Immigrant Students Succeed in U.S. Schools. *Program Information Guide No. 8* (pp. 26-28). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- Pennington, M.C. (Ed.). (1991). *Building Better English Language Programs: Perspectives on Evaluation in ESL.* Washington, DC: NAFSA: Association of International Educators.
- Menkart, D. (1993). Multicultural Education in the School Environment. In NCBE *Multicultural Education: Strategies for Linguistically Diverse Schools and Classrooms.* Washington, DC: NCBE.
- Parker, R.C. (1993). Program Review/Service Development for LEP Enrollments. *Designing an Educational Program for Low-Incidence Numbers of Limited English Proficient Students* (pp. 109-113). Providence, RI: New England Multifunctional Resource Center.
- **TESOL Policy Statements**--Materials available from TESOL, *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages* Professional Association, 1600 Cameron Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-2751. TEL: (703) 836-0774.
- TESOL, Inc. (1976). Guidelines for the Certification and Preparation of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages in the United States: Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- TESOL, Inc. (1991). Standards and Self-Study Questions for Elementary and Secondary Programs. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- TESOL, Inc. (1985). Statement of Core Standards for Language and Professional Preparation Programs. Alexandria, VA:
- TESOL, Inc. (1992). TESOL Standards: Ensuring Access to Quality Education for Language Minority Students. Alexandria, VA: Author.